

First Triumph of the Opposition.

249

always fairly or charitably — and petitioned Philip to give way. Philip hesitated and procrastinated, but at length smothered his anger and summoned sufficient resolution to bid Granvelle visit his infirm mother in Burgundy (January 1564). He accordingly took his departure in the middle of March 1564. From Besancon he never returned; and the opposition had scored its first triumph in its resistance to the royal will. For the fight against Granvelle was at the same time a fight against the autocracy and bigotry of Philip which he represented, if he did not altogether instigate. Despite all Philip's bigotry and absolutism, they had forced him to dismiss a minister who was prepared to do his will at all hazards, though not without an occasional protest. Opportunists they might be; they were not, as Granvelle averred, disloyal to their sovereign in refusing to submit to the execution of a despotic policy by an overbearing prelate. Nevertheless, in their stern opposition to his minister, Philip correctly enough divined the spirit of opposition to himself. The struggle with the cardinal was, in fact, the prelude to the struggle with the king, whose vacillation and lack of resource had only strengthened the reactionary spirit.

Meanwhile Protestantism had been gaining ground in spite of exemplary burnings by papal inquisitors like Pieter Titelman. The victims of this brutal and arbitrary functionary were numerous, but the heretic contagion spread like wildfire, and could not be stamped out. Granvelle is found bitterly complaining of the slackness of provincial stadholders, like Berghem, in enforcing the edicts. These fast-living lords were certainly not the men to play the *role* of inquisitor to humour an intolerant prelate whom they hated, or a royal bigot whose obnoxious instrument that prelate was. Orange himself at this period was at best but a latitudinarian in religion, as his marriage with a Lutheran princess shows. "The Catholics," says Pontus Payen, "reputed him a Catholic; the Lutherans a Lutheran." He certainly had not zeal enough to be a persecutor, though he might officially profess concern for the true faith in his principality of Orange. "He found fault with the severity of the theologians/" adds the same contemporary witness, a Catholic, "esteeming it, like many Catholics, a cruel thing to put a man to death merely